

Friday, August 10, 2001

4600 Dixie Hill Rd
Fairfax, VA 22030

Kimberly Topper
Food and Drug Administration, CDER
Advisors and Consultants Staff, HFD-21
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Kimberly Topper,

Allow me to begin by thanking you for taking the time to read this letter. I am writing you in regards to the forthcoming FDA hearing on Oxycontin and other opioid drugs. My concern in this matter is my mother, Carla Nees, who is recovering from a fractured sternum and has been prescribed Oxycontin by her doctor, Howard Heit, MD. I am nineteen years old and I hope to reveal to you why these natural opioid drugs should remain available to patients. Oxycontin has made an astronomical difference in my mother's recovery and without it she may not even be alive today.

My mother suffered her injury ^{two} ~~three~~ and a half years ago during a routine chiropractic adjustment. The details of this are not significant, suffice to say it was an unexpected, undeserved, and unwanted blow to all of us. Within a week she was bedridden with pain. As I think back on those hard times, it is a wonder our family pulled through with our sanity. My daily routine was to return home from school and wait bedside keeping my mother company and attending to her needs (bringing food, washcloth, etc). My mother's pain would grow so great that she became nauseous and vomited into a bowl she kept with her. I would dispose of the vomit and clean the bowl while waiting for the next round of nausea. I would also be my mother's friendly ear, conversing with her to keep her mind stimulated and comforting her on days when she would be contemplating suicide. Needless to say I was forced to sacrifice my own personal life to ensure my mother's comfort.

She was prescribed artificial painkillers that were often worse than the ailment. They made her delirious gave her vertigo. The drugs' harsh impact on her stomach added to her nausea. It was a rare thing for my mother to be able to consume and digest an entire meal (I was given the task of preparing food). Because of these negative side effects my mother would rather wait out the bad spells than suffer a worse kind of discomfort.

My mother began taking Oxycontin in November of 2000. There was not an immediate improvement, but her current condition makes the bad times seem to be a faded nightmare. Once again my mother can get up, eat a full meal, walk on her treadmill, or paint in her studio. She was even able to hold down a job. In July our family took a three-week vacation in Hawai'i, and my mother was able to fully enjoy it. Doctors have a catchy phrase they like to throw around: "quality of life." Madam, "quality of life" to me is only a slogan, but what I KNOW is that my mother is right now downstairs continuing with her life and enjoying the fact that she no longer lies in bed all day sweating, vomiting, and waiting for death. Madam, please consider my mother and see this drug for what it is: a tool to continue and enjoy your life.

Thank you,



Andy Nees